



TEXAS RETAILERS
ASSOCIATION

TRA NEWSLETTER

News affecting Retailers & Grocers in Texas Industry

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Texas Retailers Newsletter: November 2017

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Letter from the President



Hello Texas Retailers:

November is here and that means the holiday shopping season is already underway. After a year filled with much success on advocacy issues at the state and federal levels, as well as the major devastation of Hurricane Harvey, I think we are all looking forward to a great holiday shopping season for Texas retailers. On that note, we have been laying the groundwork to promote Texas retail during the holiday shopping season, starting even before the traditional kick-off to the holiday shopping season-- the Thanksgiving Holiday weekend. As we did so successfully

last year, our goal is to once again position TRA as THE resource for retail information during this most important time of the year for our members. If you, your company or store is interested in serving as one of our industry spokespeople, please contact Justin Williamson at

jwilliamson@txretailers.org.

As y'all know, one of our major successes this year was to push back on and ultimately defeat the proposed Border Adjustment Tax, or BAT, included in the initial Tax Reform plan pushed by the Congressional leadership. The retail industry's WIN on the BAT was in no small part due to the work and influence of TRA and our members. After defeating the BAT late this summer, the real conversation on Tax Reform began and that process has now led to the formal introduction of Tax Reform legislation in both houses of Congress. Although, these bills were very recently introduced, and we are early in the legislative process, the Congress has set a very ambitious timetable for moving Tax Reform through the process and getting it to the President's desk by his stated deadline of December 24th, Christmas Eve. There is certainly much to like about the initial drafts of the Tax Reform bills and overall, they look very favorable for business and the retail industry. As with all legislation, especially bills which tackle an issue as complex as taxes, the devil is in the details. A more detailed update on Tax reform appears later in this newsletter. TRA will keep you updated on the progress of Tax Reform, as developments warrant.

In addition to our work on the federal Tax Reform and to highlight the Texas retail industry during the holiday shopping season, we are also very busy planning our two great TRA member and industry events for 2018. The inaugural Advocacy Summit will be a great opportunity for members of TRA and the retail industry in Texas to spend valuable time with key lawmakers from our state. Specifically, discussing the most topical advocacy issues facing the retail industry and networking with Texas's most retail-friendly members of the Texas Legislature and Members of Congress. Additionally, the 2018 Texas Retailers Forum will be in Corpus Christi and will take place at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, July 22-23, 2018. Our annual educational Forum, hosted by the Texas Retailers Association and the Texas Retail Education Foundation, will provide retailers with timely, topical and quality program sessions and speakers. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with hundreds of retail industry leaders from across the state and country at networking functions such as our Awards Dinner, networking breaks, and our popular closing night casino party. Registration and sponsorship details and information about both great events is inside this newsletter. Make plans now to secure your company's spot at these can't miss events.

As you can see, the TRA team is busy laying the foundation for our most important efforts during 2018, while working on finishing 2017 strongly. Please don't hesitate to contact me or any member of the TRA staff team at any time. As always, thank you for supporting TRA and Happy Thanksgiving to all of you and your families, and best wishes on a successful holiday sales season.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J.F. Klumb". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Texas Retailers Association
President/CEO

2018 Texas Retailers Advocacy Summit



TRA's Advocacy Summit is a great opportunity to spend a weekend networking with Texas's most retail-friendly Members of the Texas Legislature and Members of Congress. Registration includes access to all panels, speakers, and attendees, all receptions, meals/breaks, and networking opportunities.

Register at a discounted rate until January 1, 2018!

Register for the Texas Retailers Advocacy Summit!

Legislative Update



Election season is in full swing and the lineup for 2018 is showing some big changes, challenges and a laundry list of potential new comers. The biggest known change is that House Speaker Joe Straus announced that he will not seek reelection for Speaker or his San Antonio House seat in November. While this came as a shock to everyone, it did not take long for others to begin lining up to replace him in both positions. A new Speaker of the House will bring in lots of debate and political maneuvering during the interim and has potentially drastic changes for both the legislature and business community alike. Currently only, State Rep. Phil King (R-Weatherford) and Appropriations Committee Chairman John Zerwas (R-Richmond) have filed paperwork for the

Speakers election although almost every day someone new has their name mentioned in the political circles as a potential candidate for the office. The Speaker election is held in January 2019 and is only voted on by the sitting members of the Texas House of Representatives, so we have a long way to go before a clear frontrunner, much less a new Speaker, will be apparent. With a change in Speakership also comes the likelihood of a host of new Committee Chairman, which could have an equally dramatic impact on the 86th Texas Legislature, so change is definitely coming to the Texas House.

Additionally, the musical chairs game is being played in a number of other offices including the retirement of five members of the Texas Congressional Delegation (G. Green, Poe, Hensarling, Smith and Johnson). As expected, this resulted in a number of current Texas House and Senate members setting their sights on Washington DC, and still many others vying for the seats they will leave behind in Austin. Endorsements, campaign announcements and fundraising events are keeping the political pundits busy and TRA will keep you plugged into all the news throughout the election season.

To help support Retail friendly candidates and keep those who support our industry in office, [please make your contribution to TRAPAC today!](#) Contributions to our PAC helps TRA support business minded individuals that understand our industry and will fight for our issues. This is a critical time for candidates and with your help and support TRA can make the difference for Retailers in Texas.

[Jim Sheer](#)

VP of Government & Regulatory Affairs

Federal Update

Tax Reform Update

Tax Reform is front and center at this moment on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC. The Congress has set a very ambitious timetable for moving Tax Reform through the process and getting it to the President's desk by Christmas Eve. There is certainly much to like about the Tax Reform bills and overall, they look very favorable for business and the retail industry. As with all legislation, especially bills which tackle an issue as complex as taxes, the devil is in the details. A more detailed update on Tax reform is [here for your reference](#). Given that the process is now in full swing, we encourage you to [contact your member of Congress to express your and the retail industry's support of the Tax Reform effort](#). Be on the lookout for TRA updates on the progress of Tax Reform over the next few weeks.

Americans with Disabilities Act Reform Proposed

Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX) has introduced legislation (H.R. 620) that would help address and prevent the hundreds, maybe thousands of frivolous lawsuits filed in the Food Industry as well as other industries each year using the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) as the basis for the lawsuit. Congressman Poe's bill was introduced back in January, and recently was passed by the House Judiciary Committee where it will now find its way to the House floor for consideration.

TRA and our national trade organization partners are working with House leadership and House members to raise awareness and support for the passage of HR 620. Please [click here](#) to review

an Issue Brief on the issue developed by National Grocers Association (NGA).

This is similar to legislation TRA supported in the last Texas Legislative Session (HB 1463) by Senator Kel Selinger (R-Amarillo) and Rep. John Smithee (R-Amarillo) who in their words wanted to address frivolous lawsuits and aggressive shake down tactics used by lawyers related to ADA but mainly focused on small businesses located across Texas. Governor Abbott signed the Texas Bill early in June and it became effective September 1, 2017. [Click here](#) to read the text of the bill.



Partner Spotlight: Tax Advisors Group, LLC

Tax Advisors Group is TRA's endorsed provider for business personal property tax consulting. Tax Advisors Group (TAG) is known as the leader in Texas Business Personal Property market value tax filings. Our TAG It™ system combines a proven market value analysis with third-party appraisal data to ensure that you do not pay more than your fair share of business personal property tax. Simply put, if you are just focused on compliance and not filing market value, you are losing money. TAG's results are unprecedented in the industry, with annual tax savings averaging more than 30 percent across the entire Texas client base over a fifteen-year period. Boosting the overall net income of your company is our focus.

Contact: Michael Reeves, mreeves@taxadvisorsgroup.com, 972.503.7506, Ext. 26
<http://www.taxadvisorsgroup.com/>

2018 Texas Retailers Education Foundation (TREF) Golf Tournament



Texas Retailers Golf Tournament

Benefiting the Texas Retailers Education Foundation

Eagle Pointe Golf Club
12440 Eagle Pointe Dr.
Mont Belvieu, Texas 77535

8:00AM Friday, April 20, 2018
8:30AM Shotgun Start

Individual Fee: \$175 | Golf Foursome: \$700 | Sponsorships Available!

Donations Welcome!

Donations of premium quality items for this year's tournament are welcome!

Examples include:

- Gift Certificates
- Golf Balls
- Golf Tees
- Golf Towels
- Prizes

Contact Information

Justin Williamson
jwilliamson@txretailers.org
(512) 472-8261 X 106

Learn More About the 2018 TREF Golf Tournament!

2018 Texas Retailers Forum



The Texas Retailers Forum is at the Omni Corpus Christi Hotel July 22-23, 2018. Our 2018 educational Forum, hosted by the Texas Retailers Association and the Texas Retail Education Foundation, provides retailers with timely, topical and quality program sessions and speakers. Attendees will have the opportunity to meet with hundreds of retail industry leaders from across the state at networking functions such as our Awards Dinner, networking breaks, and a closing night party - aboard the U.S.S. Lexington.

Register at a discounted rate until January 1, 2018!

Register for the Texas Retailers Forum!

Grocers Corner - In the Cart



WIC Program Update

TX WIC Program Cost Containment

For a number of months, TX WIC has posted Cost Containment price averages from seven (7) to ten (10) days past the agreed upon date. We raised the issue and the concerns of compliance from our members with TX WIC about the problem and TX WIC stated their plan and goal is that vendors under normal circumstances log onto the web site and view price averages after the 20th of each month. TX WIC begins the closeout process of the prior month on the 15th. Right now and for the next few months until the agency can transition and cut over to their new system platform, which is expected to be completed in early 2018, we can expect for the next few months to continue to experience delays in cost-containment postings and that delay will average from 7-10 days longer than normal. TX WIC is posting the pricing averages as quickly as possible and they are taking this temporary delay into consideration when they analyze vendors on Cost Containment compliance. If you have any cost containment questions, you can email the agency at: WICCostContainment@hsc.state.tx.us or reach out to Joe Williams (936-258-3414) or jwilliams@txretailers.org.

Reminder: WIC Quarterly Webinar/Conference Call Scheduled

TX WIC Program has scheduled Wednesday, November 29th starting at 2:00 pm their next Webinar/conference call program update. If you haven't received a "Save the Date" notice for this meeting from WIC TX and would like to participate or someone from your team to participate,

please send Joe (jwilliams@txretailers.org) a note with the person and their e-mail address that would like to participate and will get them placed on the WIC meeting contact list. It is a great way to stay informed of changes as well as ask questions on issues of concern.

SNAP Program Updates

SNAP Program Transaction Fee Proposed

A major credit/debit card brand has proposed to USDA to lift the prohibition restricting interchange fees on SNAP transactions. Our national trade organizations (National Grocers Association, Food Marketing Institute and others) are actively engaged in opposition to this proposal and recently sent letters to U.S. House and Senate Agriculture Committee leaders opposing the efforts of the credit card (card networks) companies to lift the transaction fee regulations. This proposal would allow card networks to charge up to an average of 48 cents per SNAP transaction, which equates to an additional \$1.3 billion cost to SNAP authorized retailers per year by conservative estimates. These extra costs not only would be devastating to SNAP Program participants throughout the nation, but place unrealistic and unnecessary costs to authorized SNAP Program vendors. National Association of Truck Stops has recently released a good article on the issue, please [click here](#) to review that article.

SNAP Program Statistics Update

We are continuing to see impact on the SNAP Program participation as well as the dollars spent due to Hurricane Harvey. We will continue to see the impact for several months. September 2017 numbers also included the Supplemental (percentage of August benefits added to September benefits for participants in the 39 disaster counties) Benefits which was substantial. You can see the drop off in October as it falls back to actual number of participant and one month of benefits placed in the accounts. I'm curious to see what November numbers will show as there was approximately 500,000 households in the 39 disaster counties that applied for D (Disaster) SNAP benefits. That was a one-time benefit of approximately \$800.00 per household on a separate D-SNAP Lone Star Card. In your stores you will see substantial increase in October and probably just as strong in November from those D-SNAP benefits being spent. Below current TX SNAP Program dollars we included the numbers from our sister states even though the national numbers lag behind by three months. November 17 and for sure December 18 should start to show an increase in normal SNAP participation due to some of the non-SNAP households receiving D-SNAP and now following D-SNAP will qualify for regular SNAP Benefits. Enclosed is the most current information available.

Please contact Joe Williams jwilliams@txretailers.org or 936-258-3414 if you have any questions regarding the statistics update.

Month	Cases	Participates	Dollars	Ave per Case
Sep 17	1,900,205	4,619,543	\$568,834,988.00	\$297.00
Oct 17	1,706,890	4,013,502	\$458,326,985.00	\$269.00

- Note- September numbers include the supplemental benefits added to the participants located in the 39 disaster counties.

Twelve Month Rolling Average

Sep-Oct 17 1,662,893 3,937,881 \$454,429,672.00.00 \$273.00

Look Back To Last Year (2016) at This Time

Oct 16 1,679,690 3,978,068 \$457,601,047.00 \$272.00

Nov 16 1,674,271 3,962,720 \$455,228,418.00 \$272.00

How do we compare on SNAP participation to our neighbors and nation-wide? Latest information is Aug 17 versus Aug16

<i>State</i>	<i>Participation</i>	<i>Households/Cases</i>	<i>Benefits/Dollars</i>
National	<5.3% >	<3.7%>	<5.0%>
Texas	<1.4%>	<1.0%>	<0.8%>
Louisiana	<17.2%>	<15.7%>	<6.2%>
Arkansas	<3.7%>	<3.8%>	<4.5%>
Oklahoma	<3.3%>	<2.1%>	<2.5%>
New Mexico	<4.0%>	<1.8%>	<8.4%>

How do we compare on WIC Program participation to our neighbors and nation-wide? The latest numbers available are July 17 compared to July 16.

State	Participation
National Average	<5.5%>
Texas	<4.2%>
Louisiana	<5.4%>
Arkansas	<4.5%>
Oklahoma	<6.3%>
New Mexico	<4.8%>

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About the Texas Retailers Association

The Texas Retailers Association (TRA) is a 501(c) 6 non-profit organization dedicated to keeping Texas “retail friendly” for business owners through legislative advocacy. Since 1926, our diverse membership has represented every segment of the retail industry throughout Texas – from the smallest neighborhood store to the largest corporate chain. Recognized as the Voice of Texas Retail, TRA effectively advocates for Texas retailers at the State and Federal level while providing value-added services and partner programs for its members. Visit www.txretailers.org and join today!

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TRA Members

Our mailing address is:
Texas Retailers Association
1250 S Capital of Texas Hwy
West Lake Hills, TX 78746-6522

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